

For Immediate Release: August 6, 2010

**CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS FROM CONNECTICUT, MASSACHUSETTS, AND VERMONT
SUPPORT APPLICATION FOR HIGH-SPEED RAIL FUNDS**

Federal Funding Will Help Establish High-Speed and Improve Intercity Rail Service in Central New England

Washington, DC – Twenty members of the Congressional delegations of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Vermont wrote to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood and the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration Joseph C. Szabo today in support of the application submitted by Connecticut, in partnership with Massachusetts and Vermont, requesting \$220 million in federal high-speed intercity passenger rail funds. The application requests federal funding for rail improvements between New Haven and Springfield, which will help connect New York City with central Connecticut, Boston, western Massachusetts, Vermont, and Montreal.

In their letter of support, the Members of Congress wrote, “Fast and frequent rail service will take cars and trucks off these congested roads, reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency. The proposed rail network that integrates major seaports, airports and transit systems will significantly improve the movement of freight, and regional and intercity travel. As a result, we expect the corridor to enable livable communities to thrive and state and local economies to grow.”

The following members of Congress supported Connecticut’s application: Senators Chris Dodd (D-CT), Joe Lieberman (I-CT), John Kerry (D-MA), Scott Brown (R-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT),

Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and U.S Representatives Rosa DeLauro (CT-3), John Larson (CT-1), Joe Courtney (CT-2), Christopher Murphy (CT-5), Jim Himes (CT-4), Barney Frank (MA-4), Richard Neal (MA-2), John Olver (MA-1), James McGovern (MA-3), William Delahunt (MA-10), Michael Capuano (MA-8), Stephen Lynch (MA-9), Niki Tsongas (MA-5), and Peter Welch (VT).

Full text of the letter is below and attached:

August 6, 2010

Dear Secretary LaHood and Administrator Szabo:

We write in support of the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail capital grant application submitted by the State of Connecticut, in partnership with the states of Massachusetts and Vermont and with the support of Amtrak, to upgrade significant segments of the Springfield Rail Line. These critical improvements will help provide the foundation for New England's regional rail vision.

As you know, the state of Connecticut has been working closely with the states of Massachusetts and Vermont and Amtrak to better link the region's cities and towns with New York City, Boston and Montreal. This regional rail vision requires significant improvements to segments of the rail network, including upgrades to the Springfield Line between New Haven, CT and Springfield, MA. This capital grant application would provide support for double tracking between New Haven and Springfield and improvements to signals, communications, crossings, bridges, and stations on the line.

Upgrades to the Springfield Line will enable improved mobility and future connectivity along two important routes—between Montreal and New York City through the Knowledge Corridor and between New York City and Boston via the Inland Route. The Knowledge Corridor will eventually connect Springfield to East Northfield, MA through several college towns, providing a more direct route for the Vermonter service between St. Albans, VT, New York City and Washington, DC. Further development of the Inland Route will allow travel between New York City and Boston, through New Haven, Springfield, and Worcester, MA. The Inland Route serving central New England is an essential alternative to the heavily traveled and capacity constrained Northeast Corridor on Connecticut's shoreline.

The Northeast has a population density over three times that of the nation as a whole, with 80 percent of the population living within 25 miles of an existing or proposed intercity passenger rail corridor. The proximity of metro areas in one of the busiest and most congested air travel markets in the country makes intercity rail a logical and worthwhile transportation option for the region.

Improvements to the corridor between New Haven and Springfield will grow ridership by enabling more roundtrips and faster travel times. For example, proposed upgrades will cut two hours of travel time between White River Junction, VT and New York City. This expansion in rail service is expected to increase ridership over 50 percent in CT, MA, and VT.

A fully developed passenger rail system in these three states will parallel the region's major highway system, which includes Interstate 91 (CT, MA, and VT), Interstate 89 (VT), and Interstate 90 (MA.) Fast and frequent rail service will take cars and trucks off these congested roads, reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency. The proposed rail network that integrates major seaports, airports and transit systems will significantly improve the movement of freight, and regional and intercity travel. As a result, we expect the corridor to enable livable communities to thrive and state and local economies to grow.

This application includes extensive rail planning efforts by the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont in close collaboration with Amtrak. The proposal has a thorough service development plan and environmental documentation. A total of five public informational hearings were held in the three states seeking public input on the project. This rail vision has been welcomed with overwhelming support, including the approval of all freight carriers in the region. And the state of Connecticut will be providing a substantial commitment of \$260 million in state funding.

We understand the Federal Railroad Administration is faced with many difficult funding decisions in the high-speed rail and intercity passenger rail program. However, we would like to stress the transformational impact this project will have on the economy and mobility in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont and the rest of New England.

Thank you in advance for your full consideration of this application and your support for New England's vision for a high-speed and intercity rail network.

Sincerely,

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